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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 3, 1959

MEMORANDUM OF MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT
(March 2, 1959 at 9:00 a.m.)



Present: General Goodpaster

I indicated to the President that I had learned Friday night, February 27, from Mr. Herter, and Saturday, February 28 from General Goodpaster, of his decision to have a Special NSC meeting on Berlin and Germany. I reported that I had a conversation with Mr. Herter about this on Saturday morning and that I had various questions which needed to be considered.

1. Attendance. After some discussion, the President specified that the statutory members and advisers, plus the Attorney General, the Secretary of the Treasury and Director of USIA should be present. He felt that all participants should be at the table, and that the only members of his staff should be General Goodpaster and Major Eisenhower. He specifically indicated that he saw no reason for the presence of the Director of the Budget or the Chairman, AEC.

2. Time. I indicated that Secretary Herter felt that the meeting should not be called until Mr. Macmillan had departed Moscow and we had full reports of the Macmillan visit. One reason was that there was some indication that there might be a softening up of the Soviet position toward the end of the visit. Also, I pointed out to the President that the State Department had had conferences with the French and British in Washington on Saturday morning, the results of which were not yet known to me. The President saw no reason to wait to have a meeting until plans had been set for Mr. Macmillan to come to this country, and he recognized that it might be necessary to have a series of meetings. I indicated to the President that we would proceed at the earliest practicable time.

3. Visibility. I raised with the President the question of whether such a meeting should be "on-the-record" or "off-the-record." I

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reminded him of the current Congressional demands that the American people be "alerted" to the potential dangers in the Berlin situation. I suggested that there were values in letting it be known that the NSC was now addressing itself intensively to these matters. I reminded the President that last summer in the Taiwan Strait crisis considerable pains had been taken to indicate that the members of the NSC had, with the President, considered the situation when he came down from Newport for a meeting at the White House. The President felt that he might soon find it necessary to make some public statement and it was important for him to have the background of the NSC meeting. I suggested that the first meeting could initially be "off-the-record" and a first item of business could be the visibility to be given to these meetings. The President felt that this was a good procedure.

4. I then indicated to the President that there were various substantive questions. The first was the breadth of the subject to be considered. By this I indicated that Mr. Herter was not certain whether the meeting should address itself to Berlin alone, or to Germany as a whole, and the various alternatives to be considered. The President directed that the discussion be on the broader basis.

5. I indicated that there needed to be some discussion of reciprocal concessions. We then agreed that one of the topics must be what military moves should be taken.

6. We agreed that there were serious legal issues.

7. Finally, the principal and overriding question was really what we propose to do. I pointed out to the President that we have elaborate planning which takes us up to the point of decision and then only consultation is provided.

Having agreed to all these, the President said that another point was troubling him and that was the matter of procedures in going to the United Nations and whether this in any event would be productive.

He said that he thought that the first meeting (and at this point it was apparent that he was thinking in terms of a series of meetings) should start out with an analysis of the problem from the beginning and a discussion of where we are and where we're going.

Gordon Gray

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Special Assistant to the President